

**Activity notes:**  
**Exploratory meeting with RECITE, Inc.**  
**ANSA EAP-PTF-CAC MBC Enhancing Impact of Citizen-Led**  
**Transparency Initiatives Project**  
**Mangaldan, Pangasinan, Philippines 17 September 2012**

**Background and rationale**

*Sustaining social accountability initiatives at the local level*

- The Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF), the Coalition Against Corruption-Makati Business Club (CAC-MBC), and the Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in East Asia and the Pacific (ANSA EAP) embarked on a two-year project aimed at building the capacities of citizen groups at the local level in sustaining transparency advocacies and citizen monitoring initiatives. The project involved partnering with networks of citizen groups in two (2) selected regions or provinces in the country, developing appropriate strategies in engaging with the local government, supporting citizen monitoring of local government performance, and sharing emerging knowledge on sustaining local social accountability and good governance efforts with other practitioners.
- Last 17 September 2012, ANSA EAP project coordinator, Mr. Randee Cabaces, met with officers and members of Responsible Citizens and Empowered Communities in Solidarity for Social Change (RECITE), Inc. at the RECITE office in Mangaldan, Pangasinan to discuss the possibility of collaboration with RECITE and its mother network, the Northern Luzon Coalition for Good Governance (NLCGG) toward advancing social accountability work in Pangasinan and in neighboring areas. Present for RECITE Inc. during the meeting were Ms. Ester Alkonga, Ms. Bing Van Tooren, and Most Rev. Jesus A. Cabrera, D.D.. NLCGG convenor group members were invited, but were unable to attend the said activity.

**Proposed objective and agenda**

*Identifying possible areas for collaboration in Pangasinan*

The initial meeting was meant to be an exploratory one, with the general objective of laying the groundwork for a possible collaboration between the NLCGG-RECITE and the PTF Project Consortium in Pangasinan and Region I. Specifically, it had the following agenda:

1. Initial introduction to the PTF project, its results framework, emerging approaches, and suggested work plan of implementation (particularly during the first year);
2. Possible starting points or focus areas (geographic and thematic) for the PTF partnership in Pangasinan, and prospects for citizen-local government engagement;

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3. Possible partnership modalities and arrangements with NLCGG-RECITE and other citizen groups or networks within Pangasinan under the PTF project.

## Key discussion points during the meeting

*Building on current efforts toward active citizenship*

- Proposed PTF project should go well with what NLCGG has been doing within its focus areas (Regions I, II, and Cordillera Autonomous Region or CAR, with locus in Pangasinan where RECITE Inc. operates ). Since 2008, RECITE has worked to capacitate individuals and communities as effective change agents in society, implementing various programs on livelihood development, institution building, social equity, and good governance.
- RECITE's current engagement with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), involving development of parent leaders under the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (conditional cash transfer or CCT) as community facilitators for the program's monthly Family Development Sessions (FDS), could be a viable platform for expanding and sustaining the impact of RECITE's citizen monitoring initiatives in Pangasinan:
  1. RECITE's recent pilot project with DSWD resulted in the capacitation of eleven (11) parent leaders-FDS community facilitators within the municipality of Urbiztondo. These parent leaders-community facilitators were able to conduct a total of 89 FDS Plus (regular FDS modules plus the good governance and active citizenship module) covering 1,894 CCT beneficiaries (86% of the total within Urbiztondo).
  2. The active citizenship and good governance module, which RECITE helped develop, involved an action learning modality wherein participants were: a) able to formulate their community vision b) Informed on the services that local governments units (including barangays) were supposed to deliver under the Local Government Code of 1991; c) Asked to identify which entitlements are present and which are absent in their own communities which are needed to realize their vision ; and, c) Encouraged to set personal and collective commitments to help address identified gaps.
  3. This active citizenship module could serve as take off point for organizing a citizen monitoring initiative among poor communities covered by the FDS Plus. Possible focus areas could include Urbiztondo, and the target expansion areas for RECITE's program on training of community facilitators: Alaminos City (with a total of 3,571 CCT beneficiaries), and the municipalities of Bani (with 2,735 beneficiaries), and Mangaldan (which is scheduled to start with the

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- CCT program this year).
4. Possible thematic areas for monitoring could include public program areas directly related to CCT requirements such as education and health. Results from the FDS Plus personal commitment setting and visioning exercises ranked these two among the CCT beneficiaries' top concerns (education was ranked first, with around 32% of the session participants' indicating it as among their top concerns; health got 16%), along with livelihood (17%), and clean and safe environment (13%). Other possible areas identified included the LGUs' compliance to the Full Disclosure Policy.
  5. Initial contact building and engagement with barangay and municipal authorities have started with RECITE's FDS Plus-based training of community facilitators and subsequent conduct of the monthly FDS with CCT beneficiaries. RECITE members cited their strong links with local government officials as one factor that could help facilitate a possible PTF partnership. Past engagements with the local public officials included monitoring of citizen participation in barangay governance (via an ANSA EAP grant), the monitoring of barangay budget performance (through a PTF grant), and a Candidates' Forum and social contracting during the last local elections.
- Networking with other civil society groups working on the proposed thematic areas or public programs need to be further considered as an important component of the PTF project. Initially, RECITE members noted the network of 4-5 organizations (including RECITE) in Pangasinan working with DSWD on the CCT-FDS Plus program, and the much broader coalition of civil society groups initiated by the provincial government.

## Key concerns and identified next steps

### *Continuing discussion on possible partnership parameters*

The group then noted the following issues and action points that need to be addressed and pushed in order to move forward the proposed PTF project in Pangasinan:

- **On partnership arrangements vis-à-vis NLCGG.** The group was limited to detailing only the option of having RECITE as implementer of the proposed PTF project since no NLCGG convener group member was present during the meeting. RECITE people in the meeting also noted that it is the only organization within the NLCGG that is now operating within Pangasinan. Under the said option, RECITE will pilot a citizen monitoring program in one (1) city and three (3) municipalities within the province, building on its initial gains from the CCT-FDS Plus program with DSWD, and with a clear understanding that lessons from

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the project will be shared with other members of NLCGG towards a possible replication and expansion of the initiative into their respective areas.

The other option raised by the group is to have several members of the NLCGG piloting and implementing a citizen monitoring program in different areas (not just Pangasinan) within Region I, II, and CAR. Since other NLCGG members are not into CCT-FDS Plus yet, other thematic focus or starting points for their respective monitoring efforts will have to be identified. RECITE volunteered to process these issues with the NLCGG Convenors Group, including partnership arrangements for both options (and in consideration of the PTF Consortium's preference for partnering with a network of citizen groups).

#### ▪ **Next partnership meeting:**

1 (Monday) or 2 (Tuesday) October 2012, RECITE Office, 10 am to 2 pm.

The group agreed to continue discussions on the emerging partnership. Invitations will be extended to selected members of NLCGG's convenor group. RECITE proposed a visit or a caucus with members of its initial pool of parent leaders-community facilitators for the CCT-FDS Plus. Proposed agenda for the said meeting: 1) Finalization of partnership parameters and arrangements for PTF project implementation; 2) Continuing discussion on possible focus areas for the citizen monitoring (including other possible partners on the ground); and, 3) Details for initial project activities, including the proposed two-day strategic planning session with partners (initial target dates: 25-26 October, or 29-30 October 2012; venue: Galikin Community Center, Mangaldan, Pangasinan).